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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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1 October 2019

Christopher Raymond
Headteacher
Christ the King Catholic School, Amesbury
Earls Court Road
Amesbury
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 7LX

Dear Mr Raymond

Special measures monitoring inspection of Christ the King Catholic School, Amesbury

Following my visit to your school on 17–18 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2018. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2018.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - securing leadership capacity in the school so that leadership is not reliant on external support
 - securing an effective safeguarding culture
 - ensuring that middle leaders receive the training and support they need to meet the requirements of their roles
 - establishing clear systems to check the progress of all groups of pupils so that the measurement of pupils' achievement is accurate
 - ensuring that leaders' checks on teaching are robust and that teachers act on leaders' advice so that pupils who have previously underachieved catch up quickly
 - improving the provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that these pupils make consistently good progress
 - insisting that teacher assessment is accurate
 - ensuring that curriculum requirements are met, in English, mathematics and across a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that leaders and governors track pupils' behaviour so that it improves and becomes good.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenge middle-attaining and the most able pupils sufficiently
 - teachers plan work that meets pupils' needs in English so that pupils use and apply their reading and writing skills well and make good progress
 - teachers plan work that enables pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to reason and solve problems proficiently for their age
 - teaching in the early years is consistently good, assessment is accurate and provision inside and outside is consistently good.
- Improve the quality of personal development and welfare urgently by ensuring that:
 - teaching motivates and interests pupils, so that pupils' passivity is minimised, and pupils consistently apply their best effort to their learning
 - learning time is used to its full extent across the day
 - safeguarding systems minimise pupils' risk of harm and support the most vulnerable pupils to achieve consistently well.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 September 2019

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, a local authority officer, the chair of the governing body, new teachers, support staff and groups of pupils. The inspector also held telephone conversations with a representative from the Diocese of Clifton and a representative from the Pickwick Learning and Teaching Alliance.

Context

Three new teachers have joined the school, all are in key stage 2. A deputy headteacher from another local school has been appointed on a part-time basis. Leaders have implemented a staff restructure. This has led to a reduction in the number of support staff by half.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

The determined efforts of the headteacher continue to bring about the school's recovery. Parents and carers are positive about improvements and say their children are happy in school. Despite the many changes and leaders' increased expectations, the headteacher has established a 'can do' culture and staff morale is good. Staff appreciate leaders' guidance and support. Leaders have continued to embed the systemic changes initiated last year.

Leaders make close checks on teaching to ensure that teachers use time well and assess pupils accurately. Leaders have put new plans in place this term so that all curriculum requirements are met, including in English and mathematics. These plans help staff to understand what it is that pupils need to be taught and when. Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils. As a result, pupils are being taught material appropriate to their age and stage of development. More needs to be done, however, to ensure that teaching extends the knowledge of the most able pupils as well as better supporting pupils who have gaps in their learning.

Teachers are now making better use of what they know pupils can already do to plan what they do next. This is evident in mathematics lessons where pupils use their prior knowledge of key facts to solve problems. Similarly, in writing, teachers support the development of pupils' knowledge effectively. The vast majority of pupils learn to read accurately in Years 1 and 2. However, those pupils who require more help do not gain the knowledge and skills they need to read accurately quickly enough. Last year, teaching in key stage 2 was weaker than in key stage 1. Leaders' new approaches in Years 3 to 6 are paying off in terms of rising standards.

Stability in staffing and training has ensured that children get off to a flying start with their reading in the early years. The teaching of reading and phonics is prioritised. Most children who have had a whole year in the Reception class are well prepared for Year 1. Leaders' investment in the indoor and outdoor learning environment has enabled teaching staff to provide the curriculum required for pupils starting school. Across the school, including in the early years, the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) still requires further fine-tuning. Staff do not know how to adapt the curriculum to meet these pupils' needs well.

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive, and their conduct around school is respectful. When teachers make their expectations clear, and where work is well matched to pupils' needs, pupils are attentive in lessons and concentrate well. Learning time is now used to its full extent across the school day. Pupils join in with lessons promptly at the beginning of the day and after breaktimes. The school's curriculum helps pupils to know how to keep safe. Pupils say there is hardly any bullying and that there are lots of adults to go to if they have worries. The network of staff to support pupils' pastoral needs is effective. Procedures are now well established to minimise pupils' risk of harm. Pupils' attendance has improved to be in line with the national average.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The momentum of improvement is gathering pace. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher has created a senior leadership team that works well together to drive up standards. New middle leaders have been appointed with relevant experience and expertise. They are able to support teachers with their strong subject knowledge. All leaders provide a united and coherent vision to staff so that expectations are entirely clear. In doing so, leaders are mindful about staff workload and consult staff on this matter when implementing changes. Staff appreciate this consultation. They share the desire to tackle weaknesses with the same level of determination.

The headteacher has fine-tuned the school improvement plan since the last visit. As a result, governors are better placed to hold leaders to account. They know the school well and challenge leaders effectively. Governors no longer accept information at face value but probe for further information. They seek external verification as well as seeking evidence from their monitoring visits. Governors have prioritised immediate school improvement and are now succession planning for the next phase of the school's life.

Leaders continue to follow the suggested improvements identified in the pupil premium review. They have established effective systems to monitor support for the most vulnerable disadvantaged pupils. There remains more to be done to ensure that leaders realise their ambition for these pupils. In particular, teachers need to have a greater understanding of the barriers to pupils' learning.

Better teaching is exposing gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders now provide effective support to enable teachers to adapt their plans to tackle the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Fewer teachers are requiring intensive support. Improvements in the provision for pupils with SEND have been too slow. For example, so far this year, teachers have not received all the information they need to support pupils. They do not know enough about the learning needs of pupils in their class. Greater urgency is required to support those pupils who have previously underachieved or those with SEND. Sharing of expertise is needed between mainstream classes and the resource base.

Leaders have ensured that as teaching has improved, so has pupils' behaviour. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons. Teaching increasingly motivates pupils so that pupils apply their best efforts to their learning. Records show few instances of poor behaviour. There were no exclusions last academic year. However, teachers need further guidance from leaders to meet the needs of the few pupils who struggle to regulate their own behaviour.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

Leaders have not gone for quick fixes. They have tackled the fundamental barriers to the school's work by improving teachers' subject knowledge and their ability to decide what is taught and when.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

The approach to supporting pupils with SEND is not systematic. It is not bringing about sufficient improvement. Greater urgency and precision are needed to support pupils with SEND and those who have underachieved.

External support

The strong partnership between the local authority, the Clifton Diocese and the Pickwick Learning and Teaching Alliance has strengthened leadership at senior and middle leader level. Consequently, school leaders have been able to support teachers' subject knowledge.